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Stonnington Leader, Melbourne

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HOT TOPIC

What's the best way to make pools safer?

**RE: "Pool plan muddies water",
Stonnington Leader, July 25**

LEADER Community News is to be commended for continuing its "Make Pools Safe" campaign and supporting mandatory inspections.

I believe this is exactly what should occur – the question is how it will be implemented.

I agreed to have my pool photographed (*Stonnington Leader*, July 25) because it provides an example of how difficult it will be for many pools to have a fence around the perimeter.

Our "free-form" pool was built 17 years ago and, at the time, we complied with the regulations, and still do. As "empty nesters" we do not have young children living at home – and I am sure there are many Victorian pool owners in a similar situation.

Retrospectively introducing legislation for pool owners will not be enough. The two children who tragically drowned in backyard pools last year gained access to their fenced pool. One gate was faulty and the other instance the gate was propped open. And in both instances, there was no adult supervision.

Note – four children drowned last year, two in backyard pools, one in a bath, the other in a dam. The other statistics rarely mentioned are children who have been mentally and physically incapacitated.

In council, I questioned the State Government's understanding of how such legislation would be implemented – and whether it would be effective.

The Victorian State Government should be closely evaluating the Queensland and NSW pool regulations which still create confusion about what complies (for example, proximity of garden furniture, pots, etc near the pool fence perimeter).

But, the reality is, nothing

replaces adult supervision around young children at all times, whether it's a pool, a garden fountain or a bath.

Children can drown in less than 6cm of water – and it takes only seconds.

The answer?

■ **AN** education program every summer reminding all pool owners to ensure they are complying with regulations (as they were initially introduced)

■ **ADVISING** all pool owners – and parents – to learn CPR

■ **ENCOURAGE** pool owners to install a permanent guide chart on how to perform CPR in the vicinity

of the pool (NSW introduced this)

■ **REMIN**d parents constantly of the consequences of leaving children unattended anywhere near water, whether it's in a fish pond, fountains, buckets, inflatable pools, baths or sinks.

While I do support mandatory inspections to ensure pool owners have responsibly secured their pools, we must determine how this will be conducted effectively. If it is to be co-ordinated by local councils/shires, then there needs to be some leadership and more direction from the State Government.

CR SALLY DAVIS, Stonnington Council, East Ward



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Cr Sally Davis at her swimming pool. Picture: DAVID CROSLING